



October 14, 2009

**Welcome to my weekly email update - a brief summary of some of the more notable events from Washington, DC and the U.S. Senate during the last seven days. I hope you'll find this useful and informative.**

## **Health Care Debate Continues**

This past Saturday marked one month since I was sworn into the United States Senate. On that day, I was privileged to deliver a national address on behalf of Republicans to discuss health care reform. [Click here if you would like to see the video.](#)

Families in Florida and across America are struggling with the increasing costs of health insurance, and tens of millions of Americans have no health insurance at all.

We in the Congress have a duty to tackle this problem, but the solution we settle upon should not be rushed, and the solution should not be worse than the problem we are trying to solve.

The questions we need to ask before Congress votes on any reform proposal include: Will this significantly improve access to quality care? Will this improve your ability to choose your insurance and your doctor? Will this reduce or increase premiums? And finally, what is the cost? Until those questions are answered, Congress needs to keep working. Health care reform will impact too many people and too large a portion of our economy to move hastily. We have to get it right.

## **Florida Needs High Speed Rail**

Last Thursday, I met with our nation's Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, to talk about Florida's need for a high-



speed rail system. Our state has applied for Federal grant monies to build two high-speed rail corridors (Tampa-Orlando and Orlando-Miami.) Given our population and the distance between major cities, I stressed the need to develop those lines within the next few years.



Secretary Ray LaHood understands our needs and stressed Florida must continue developing SunRail and other commuter rail options in order to demonstrate our commitment to providing multimodal transportation options. If Secretary LaHood approves Florida's request for \$2.6 billion, the Tampa-Orlando high-speed rail service could begin as early as 2014.

## **Mayport Wins Dredging Funds and Wharf Upgrade**

Naval Station Mayport scored a major victory last Wednesday when it was announced Congress will restore \$76 million for critically important dredging and wharf upgrade projects.

A House committee stripped the \$76 million from Mayport earlier this year. As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I was pleased House members agreed to the Senate position that these projects were critical to maintaining Mayport's ability to carry out its current and future missions.

The \$76 million includes \$46.3 million for dredging the Mayport channel and the balance for upgrades at Charlie Wharf.

## **Growing Trade for Florida and the U.S.**

As the lead Republican on the Senate Commerce subcommittee charged with looking for U.S. trade opportunities, last week I highlighted the need for the Federal government to take a more active role in supporting private enterprise efforts to trade abroad.

As lawmakers, we must find ways to ensure our nation's competitiveness. One clear way is for the Federal government to support entrepreneurs and small business owners through coherent, cost-effective, and performance-based initiatives. With 95 percent of the world's customers living outside our borders, it is vital we develop sound economic policies with robust export promotion initiatives.

Testifying at the hearing at my invitation was Orlando resident Brad Pierce, the president of Restaurant Equipment World, a family-owned restaurant equipment provider. His is one of the more than 43,000 Florida companies that export their goods and services and employ more than 597,000 Floridians.

Thank you for taking the time to review some of the happenings in

Washington. If there's something you would like to see discussed, [please send me a note](#).

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